Finally, the Council should have the power of altering or modifying the provisions of the Legislative Council Regulation.

195. Responsible government in Travancore.

MR. A. N. VISWANATHA PILLAI (*Member, Quilon taluk, Group 1*) pointed out the evils of recruiting Dewans from the British service. The officers taken on loan from British India cared only to be in the good books of the British Government. The Interportal Trade Convention, the Periyar water agreement, the Cochin harbour scheme, the Kannan Devan Hills contract all these illustrated the light-heartedness with which foreign Dewans sacrificed the interests of the State in order to gain their own ends.

The member next dealt with the evils of appointing foreigners, especially Europeans who had no acquaintance with the country, as heads of departments. Incidentally he made reference to the Police Department, and said that though Mr. Pitt was a capable officer, the discipline of the department had suffered under his administration. So far as the Education Department was concerned, the Director was a person who had no acquaintance with the vernaculars of the State and hence was not fit to control the vernacular branch of the department.

The member then referred to various topics such as reduction of the pay of high officers, relief of unemployment, development of indigenous industries, reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly etc. The Assembly was to be put on a statutory basis. The duration of the Assembly was to be extended to three years. The Assembly was also to be empowered to ask questions, to move resolutions and to pass the annual Budget.

196. The system of government the country wants.

MR. JOSEPH MALIAKKAL (*Member, Nominated*) said that there was much confusion of thought in the talk about 'responsible government' in Travancore. The expression was picked up in British India and people sought to apply it in the same sense to Travancore. Those who did so forgot that in British India they had an alien government. What the people there wanted was therefore an indigenous government which would be responsible to them. But conditions in Travancore were entirely different. In Travancore there was an indigenous government conducted by and in the name of a benevolent Ruler. The Maharajas of the State were Rulers by birth and not by election of the people. They were Rulers for life, their tenure could not be determined by the will of the subjects. The term 'responsible government' could not therefore be applied to the Government of Travancore in the sense in which it was used in relation to the British Indian Government.

The question then arose how far the principles of 'responsible government' as understood abroad could be established in Travancore without conflicting with the essentially monarchical nature of the existing government of the State. For this purpose some people would look for guidance farther abroad than British India and go to a country like England. In England, as everybody knew, responsible government existed in the form of a government by Parliament. This was possible there in view of the prevailing system of party government. In Travancore there was no such party system. Such parties as there were followed communal lines. There was one more important fact to be taken note of in the case of Travancore. Though the total strength of the population of the State was about 45 lakhs, the number of persons qualified to vote at the Legislative Council elections counted only $1\frac{1}{4}$ lakhs. Any government that was responsible to the Legislative Council would hence be responsible only to 3 per cent. of the population. In fact the government itself would be one by a narrow section of the population and not by the whole or even by the smallest majority. The establishment of responsible government in Travancore at the present moment was therefore absolutely impossible.

All that was possible under existing circumstances was for the Ruler and the Minister to ascertain the wishes of the people and satisfy them as far as possible.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

One thing that they could do was to broaden the franchise for the Legislative Council. But then they had also to protect the interests of the minority communities. Proportional representation was a means tried by some governments to protect minorities. But experiments in that direction had proved to be failures. Another device was the creation of communal electorates. It was the fashion of some political thinkers to decry such electorates. But their criticisms, impelled as they often were by personal interests, had to be taken at a discount. In British India they had communal electorates and probably that example could be followed in Travancore. The powers of the Council could also be enhanced. The scope of the present reserved subjects could for example be narrowed very much. If these changes were made in regard to the Council, the Assembly would become a superfluity.

There were some people who thought that an Executive Council would serve to establish better Government in the country. But it was impossible to see how under the existing conditions of the Legislative Council an Executive Council responsible to it could be formed and if formed how it would tend to improve the administration. The only result of creating an Executive Council at the present moment would be to add to the number of high-paid officers in the State.

DEWAN'S REPLY: I propose to reply collectively to the last few speakers who dealt with the question of responsible government, of the reform of the Assembly and of the remodelling of the Legislative Council. All these speakers, with one pitiful exception, supplied me with valuable contributions to the subject; and perhaps the most striking and thoughtful was that of the last speaker. It showed a complete grasp of the fact that conditions in Travancore are different from conditions obtaining elsewhere.

Last year, at the session of this Assembly, I remarked as follows in respect of the reform of the Popular Assembly:—

"I shall endeavour to take up the question in all its aspects during the course of the next year so that, before this Assembly meets next year, you may, if I am able to fulfil my intention, be in a position to know the lines upon which I propose to effect this reconstitution."

I took up, as I said I would, the question of reconstruction of this Assembly and I set upon my task with two definite propositions before me. The first was that we shall probably suffer more harm than good if we simply went on blindly adopting measures or means adopted elsewhere under conditions which do not apply to this country and its peoples; and secondly, that this Assembly, in whatever manner it is reconstituted, should not lose its paramount feature, *i. e.*, its enabling Government to ascertain the needs of the people as told by the people themselves, to have the requirements which make for the peace, contentment, prosperity and well-being of the people generally.

I will indicate what the special value that I find in this Assembly is. There are two ways in which the Government can get to know the needs of the people. Government must go to the people; and the other, the people must come to the Government. Fortunately this is possible in Travancore in both its aspects, and this Assembly represents the occasion when the people come face to face with Government and, day by day, talk to Government and place their simple needs, urgent requirements and all that makes for their well-being directly before Government.

In the course of preparing myself for the reform of this Assembly I read through the twenty four years' proceedings of this Assembly and the forty years' proceedings of the Legislative Council, by no means a light task. I will not refer to the Legislative Council for the moment. I shall confine my remarks to the Assembly. I find that much of the road-making, bridge building, schools or dispensaries, and many other necessary and desirable things, during the last twenty-four years owed their origin to this Assembly. It is this Assembly that brought these to the notice of the Government, urged them upon the Government, until the Government in a large measure granted them what they wanted. That, I say, is the most valuable characteristic of this Assembly and whatever is done this must not be lost.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

How then are we going to reform it? A few gentlemen spoke of franchise. I quite agree that the electorate requires modification. The people here want to do something really and not merely talk. There also I agree that the members are quite right. But, how is the machinery to be found for that? Then I set to work to study as carefully as I could, with whatever material I could command, the position as it was in Travancore long years ago. I find from inscriptions, records and from tradition that Travancore had its *kara yogams*, *Nattu koottams*, *Desa Sanghoms*, and so on, properly organised self-government. I may go so far as to say that we had many of the characteristics of democracy. But in course of time these had withered and possibly in many cases become atrophied. But that these habits of self-help and democracy still survive in the country, I am convinced. We still have *kara yogams* although they have been deflected from their original purpose. Why should we not seize all these materials and see whether we could not form representative institutions built upon old methods and habits and traditions?

Then another problem is this. How is the Assembly so to be moulded that it will not clash with the Legislative Council or will not be a superfluity in relation to the Legislative Council. Points of contact have to be found. Methods of mutual co-operation have to be decided upon.

I have indicated the directions in which one has to turn in reforming the Assembly. Believe me, the task before me is by no means a simple or easy one. I have collected a large amount of material, made many notes, drawn up several schemes. But I have not yet arrived at one which I think will be acceptable to you and to Government and will work for the permanent advance and prosperity of the people. This is not a thing which I can easily finish off in leisure moments in daily routine or between Council session and Council session. All this takes time for consideration. And I can say no more than this just now, that plans are now gradually formulating themselves and taking shape; and before long I hope to ask a committee to go into the skeleton, the frame-work of a re-constituted Assembly, which I shall place before them for examination. But I decline to tie myself to a date.

Mr. N. MADHAVAN NAIR (*Member, Trivandrum taluk Group II*) then spoke as follows:—

Sir,

On behalf of the members of the 24th Session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, I beg leave to request that you will be pleased to convey to Her Gracious Highness the Maha Rani Regent, our most respectful and profound feelings of loyalty and devotion to Her Highness for the numerous blessings the people of this State enjoy under Her Highness' beneficent rule.

During the last three years of your administration, we are conscious that the State has made rapid strides of advancement and progress in different directions and it is needless here to recount the several acts of public utility undertaken during your regime, calculated to further the welfare and prosperity of the State.

It will indeed be a source of gratification for us to see the useful schemes like those of Railway Extension, Water-supply and Electric Lighting initiated by you assuming practical shape and we pray that Her Highness the Maha Rani Regent be pleased to give you ample opportunities so that these may become a *fait accompli* during your tenure of office itself.

We also pray to Her Highness the Maha Rani Regent to afford us the privilege of witnessing the proposed Reformed Assembly being opened by you at no distant date.

We, in conclusion, beg to offer our sincere and warm thanks to you for the uniform kindness, courtesy and consideration with which you heard our representations and for your honesty of purpose and sincerity of intentions as evidenced by the replies we have received to our representations.

Dewan: We will now prorogue this session and meet again next year.

The Assembly was prorogued at 4·33 P. M.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly